

ON THE MEANING AND USE OF THE WORD *INDRAGOPA*

As yet no satisfactory explanation has been given of Skt. *indragopa* which, as a matter of fact, is a well-known expression, but has escaped the notice of scholars for several reasons. The compound is transparent and its sense apparently clear, at least at first sight, as each of the two members consists of an extremely familiar word and thus does not seem to pose any problems.

To begin with, we must distinguish, as dictionaries do, between two different meanings of *indragopa* or, to put it more accurately, between two different types of compounds using the very same words. In reality, however, neither of the two senses of *indragopa* can be regarded as a sort of primary meaning from which the other was derived. As we shall see, the lexicographical entries represent two distinct lexemes which should be kept apart very clearly. I hope to demonstrate in this paper that the two words only happen to be identical in appearance and structure and that, in fact, they are homonyms¹. Neither the prior member of compound, that is to say, *indra*, nor the final member, that is to say, *gopa*, coincides semantically.

The first usage of *indragopa* does not raise any difficulties and, therefore, need not be treated exhaustively. It occurs in *RV* VIII, 46, 32, where it says: *té te vāyav imé jánā mādanti indragopā mādanti devágopāḥ*. The compound *indragopa* is here employed as « (those) men protected

1. It is, therefore, incorrect that the two homonyms *indragopa* are listed as different « meanings » of one common head-word as, for example, in R. L. TURNER, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-aryan Languages*, Oxford, 1966: *indragōpa*, « having Indra as protector », m. « cochineal insect, fire-fly » (*indra-*, *gopá-*). The two words should, on the contrary, be registered as two separate entries, that is to say, *indragopa*¹ and *indragopa*².

by Indra » or, more literally, « (those) men having Indra as (their) protector ». It should be quite clear, but nevertheless worth pointing out that the word *indra*, as used in the first member of this ṛgvedic term, is to be understood as signifying the god Indra, while the word *gopā*, too, the second member of compound, conveys its most expected and ordinary sense, which is cowherd, guardian, or protector. Structurally, ṛgvedic *īndragopa* runs parallel with a number of similar compounds such as, for example *devāgopa*, « protected by the gods », appearing in the above-mentioned passage, *āhigopa*, « protected by the serpent » (RV I, 32, 11), or *vātagopa*, « portected by the wind » (AV). In all these cases a first member-noun is compounded with *gopā* in the sense of protector.

In contra-distinction to the ṛgvedic use of the word, the meaning of the second compound is much less explicit and, moreover, is constructed differently. While the earliest passages containing this expression are to be found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* and the Buddhist Canon in the Pāli recension, the same term has, ever since the *Rāmāyaṇa*, most frequently been used in poetical texts, where *īndragopa*, and the associations connected with it, have developed into a favourite literary motif forming part of the imagery to be chosen by the poet when describing the rainy season or, more particularly, its beginning. *īndragopa*, in this connexion, denotes a tiny velvety animal which, appearing in large numbers at the beginning of the monsoon, becomes an intensely red colour, and, on account of its colour, is often compared to red silk, laquer, the glow of fire, a ruby or, perhaps most frequently, to blood. In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Up.* II, 3, 6 the red lustre of the *īndragopa* serves, together with a few other objects of comparison, to describe the brilliant form of the *Puruṣa* (*puruṣasya rūpa*) which, inter alia, is said to be *yathendragopa*, while in another *Upaniṣad*, the *Amṛtabindūpaniṣad*, when explaining the colours of the various branches of the *Prāṇa*, i.e., *Apāna*, *Samāna*, *Udāna* and *Vyāna*, it is the brilliancy of the *Apāna* which is likened to that of an *īndragopa*. Stanza 37 of this *Upaniṣad* ends: *apānas (tasya madhye tu) īndragopasamaprabhaḥ*.

As has been mentioned before, early references to *īndragopa*, in Pāli invariably called *īndagopaka*, are also to be met with in several Pāli sources. The word is repeatedly used in the *Jātakas*, but also occurs, of course, in other *Tipiṭaka* texts, in commentaries and non-canonical writings. Quite a number of these Pāli passages give a far better idea of the animal in question than do the above-quoted two *Upaniṣads*. We are in several places informed that at the beginning of the monsoon, when the rains set in and the meadows grow green after the very first showers, *īndragopas* arise from out of the ground. The newly moistened green earth is then covered, tinted, or even turned red, by vast numbers of

beautiful *indragopas*. The Critical Pāli Dictionary (= CPD) lists the following characteristic quotations:

Ja. VI, 173, 25: *mahī indagopakasañchannā sobhati harit'uttamā*,
Ja. VI, 497, 227: *haritaṃ dakkhisi mediniṃ indagopakasañchannaṃ*,
Ap. I, 20: *lohitakā subhā indagopakavannābhā bhūmi*,
Dhp-a. I, 20, 1: *navavaṭṭhāya bhūmiyā bahū indagopakā uṭṭhahimsu*,
Ja. IV, 258, 5: *etasmīṃ vanasaṇḍasmīṃ ambā sālā ca pupphitā (bhūmi)³ indagopakasañchannā*.

In *Theragāthā* 13, which was the first passage to arouse my interest in this topic⁴, it is rocks that are described as covered with *indragopas*: *indagopakasañchannā te selā ramayanti maṃ*, « these rocks, covered with *indagopakas*, delight me ».

Among the other references to be found in Pāli texts, these descriptive passages are especially worthy of notice, since they shed a much better light on the life and behaviour of that tiny creature than other, mostly shorter passages do. Naturally, the *indragopa* figures in some similes, too, although such comparative uses in Pāli are scarcely illustrative. There is, however, one passage contained in the *Vinaya*, which, in fact, is extremely important. In *Vin.* III,42,1 we are told that a large company of monks, when gathering for the *vassāvāsa*, built themselves huts of grass (*tiṇakuṭikā*), which were all quickly demolished. The venerable Dhaniya, one of these *bhikkhus*, having failed three times to keep the grass hut he had constructed, finally, being the son of a potter, built a hut of nothing but mud and, the work finished, baked it with a fire of grass, pieces of wood and cow-dung. Now « it was », as the text proceeds, « a beautiful hut, pleasing to look at and as red as an *indagopaka* »:

sā ahosi kuṭikā abhirūpā dassanīyā pāsādikā lohitikā seyyathāpi indagopako.

This passage, too, informs us that the *indragopa* is a red-coloured and beautiful creature, though it may appear somewhat surprising that the hut of a *bhikkhu*, built as a temporary dwelling during the rain-period, should be compared with precisely an *indragopa*. On closer exa-

2. This is a quotation from the *Vessantarajātaka*. Strangely enough, our line and the lines 497, 20-21 refer to the winter season (*hemante* 20, *hemantike māse* 22). The author seems, however, to have made a mistake as regards poetical motifs, since not only the *indragopas* in 23, but also the mentioning of both the peacocks and the Kuṭaja tree in the preceding (14ff.) and the following lines (24f.) quite clearly point to the rains.

3. Cf. *Ja.* IV, 258, 6ff.: *tattha indagopakasañchannā ti etassa vanasaṇḍassa bhūmi*, etc.

4. See S. LIENHARD, *Sur la structure poétique des Theratherīgāthā*, JA CCLXIII, 1975, p. 385 and note 35. Unfortunately, I there made the mistake of defining *indagopakas* as « certain insects ».

mination, however, the simile does not seem so far fetched. The comparison is supported by no less than three characteristics which are common both to the animal and the hut of a *bhikkhu*. Among these three *tertia comparationis* we may, firstly, take note of the rains, for both the *indragopa* and Dhaniya's hut are connected directly with the monsoon. Secondly, we notice the red colour and, thirdly, the velvety outside which, as far as the hut is concerned, could be produced very easily. Certain kinds of mud, when well baked, become a shade of red and, moreover, if the mud is mixed thin, can even yield a velvety surface.

It is amusing to see that the Pāli descriptions of the rain-moistened earth covered by *indragopas* directly point the way to the imagery used in classical *kāvya*. As, however, at least one example of a genuinely poetical use is already attested in a poem of the Pāli Canon, namely *Therag.* 13, which I quoted above, the motif must be ascribed to an ancient tradition which is perhaps of popular origin, but which is certainly anterior to *kāvya* writing in Sanskrit. The fact that the *indragopa* forms part of the imagery for depicting *varṣā* and, more particularly *prāvṛṣ*, that is to say, the first half of the rainy season comprising the Month of Āṣāḍha and Śrāvaṇa, and as such was accepted quite early, is confirmed by no less an authority than the *Bharatiya-Nāṭyaśāstra*. The chapter on *citrābhinaya* treating the representation of various things, such as of persons, animals, mountains, trees and, among others, the seasons, gives, as regards the early monsoon, the following rule:

kadambanimbakaṭajaiḥ śādvalaiḥ sendragopakaiḥ /
kadambakair mayūrāṇaṃ prāvṛṣaṃ saṃnirūpayet // (XXVI, 34)

« One should represent the (first half of) the rainy season by Kadamba-, Nimba- and Kuṭaja-flowers, by (spots of) green grass abounding in *indragopas* and a number of peacocks ». In Sanskrit poetry, the way of description developed in Pāli was to begin with, merely continued, not infrequently using partly identical words or patterns of thought, while, subsequently, the motif became elaborated and increasingly refined in its details. Thus stanzas from early *kāvya* literature describing the advent of the rains like just to mention the wet ground or places abounding in fresh green grass (*śādvala*, *śaṣpa*) which, as is said in the Pāli quotations, are thickly covered with *indragopas*. Many of these stanzas contain simple descriptions, while other already play upon similes which, at this early stage, are quite uniform: The poet will compare the earth with a beautiful woman and, extending this often used *upamā*, will liken the red *indragopas* on the ground either to the red spots of the lady's dress or to the bright gems of her jewelry. I quote

only the following verses two of which make use, instead of the compound *indragopa*, of the synonymous term *śakragopa*.

*Rāmāyaṇa, Kiṣkindhāk. XXVIII, 41*⁵

*prahṛṣṭasannāditabarhiṇāni saśakragopākulaśādvalāni /
caranti nīpārjunavāsītāni gajāḥ suramyāṇi vanāntarāṇi //*

« Elephants pass through the lovely woodlands, fragrant with Nīpa- and Arjuna-flowers, where cheerful peacocks cry out and patches of green grass abound in *indragopas* ».

Harivaṃśa LXVI, 55:

*navavarṣāvasiktāni śakragopākulāni ca /
naṣṭadāvāgnimārgāṇi vanāni pracakāśire //*

« The woodlands are beautiful: they are sprinkled with fresh showers of rain and, while abounding in *indrogopas*, have pathways where the forest fires are quenched ».

Harita:

*nīlaśasyaharitojjvalā mahī kulyakāsalilasamplutā sarit /
indragopakavirājītā dharā paṅkabhūṣaṇavibhūṣītā ca sā*⁶ //

« The earth shines green with dark rice, the waters of the river bubble in their bed, the ground is resplendent with *indragopas* and, (in places), is decorated with mud ».

Ṛtusaṃhāra II, 5 cd:

*vibhāti śukletararatnabhūṣītā varāṅganeva kṣitir indragopa-
kaiḥ //*

« Earth shines forth with her *indragopas* like a beautiful lady decorated with dark-coloured jewels ».

*Rāmāyaṇa, Kiṣkindhāk. XXVIII, 24*⁷:

*bāleṇdragopāntaracitritena vibhāti bhūmir navaśādvalena /
gātrānuvṛttena śukaprabheṇa nārīva lākṣoḥṣitakambalena //*

« Earth, with patches of fresh and green grass, which in between are coloured with young *indragopas*, shines like a lady clothed in a tight-fitting, parrot-coloured and laquer-sprinkled dress ».

I do not intend to enlarge, within the narrow bounds of this paper, on the further literary development of this motif. *indragopa* imagery has been employed by a great many poets⁸ and it was also used in

5. Bombay edition.

6. Quoted after *Śabdakalpadruma*, vol. IV, p. 297, sub *varṣā*.

7. Bombay edition.

8. Many valuable references to its occurrence are to be found in V. RAGHAVAN, *Rtu in Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi, 1972.

Classical Hindī, in Avadhī as well as Brajbhāṣā, where the word *indragopa* was either taken over as an unchanged tatsama or, more frequently, was substituted by the tadbhava *bīr(a)bahūṭī*. The latter expression is traceable back to Skt. *vīravadhūṭī* which, semantically, is identical with an apparently more popular Sanskrit name of the *indragopa* or *śakragopa*, namely *indravadhū* or *indravadhūṭī*. This is corroborated by Dalhaṇa who, when commenting on *Suśrutasaṃhitā* I,30, explains *indragopa* as: *indragopāḥ prāvṛtkālajā atiraktakrimayaḥ indravadhū iti loke*, « *indragopas* are intensely red *krimis* (or *kṛmis*) which appear at the time of the early rains and are called *indravadhū* by the people ». In poetical contexts no mention is made of the animal's velvety surface, which, however, is indicated by the word *makh(a)maṭī* which is another denomination in Hindī. That our animal is a creature appearing in large numbers is shown by the fact that the word *indragopa* and its synonyms, except in comparative usage, are almost exclusively used in the plural and are also to be interpreted in the plural sense in a nonfinal position in word-compounds, as we have already seen in the Pāli expression *indragopakasañchanna*. It may also be mentioned that, as far as I know, Sanskrit and Pāli sources do not refer to the fact that *indragopas* are often devoured by birds as is shown in the Tamil quotation *intirakōpaṇ kauviy iRakuḷarkīNRa mañṇai* in *Civakacintāmaṇi* 1819, where peacocks are said to snatch up with their beak the *intirakōpam*, which in Tamil is also called *tampala(m)* or *tampalappūcci*.

After thus discussing the main characteristics of the *indragopa* as they can be gathered from various texts, we now return to the starting-point of my investigation. The question arises: what is the exact meaning of this animal name? Is it really correct to render the word as « fire-fly » and « cochineal », as, amongst others, Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* does⁹, or to interpret *indragopāḥ*, by taking up its apparently literal sense, as « Indra's cowherds » or the « herds of Indra »¹⁰ (*indrasya gopāḥ*)? When consulting dictionaries, translations, etc., we observe that, in fact, there exists an enormous confusion with regard not only to the meaning of the word, but also to the proper assignement of that creature to a definite order of the animal kingdom. Scholars have identified it variously as either a kind of insect or beetle in general or, more precisely, as the *Coccus lacca*, as the *Coccus septempunctata*, i.e., the lady-bird or coccinelle (PW), or the above-mentioned cochineal. We are not better helped by the comment of Dalhaṇa either, who, as has already been stated, identifies the *indragopas* as *kṛmis*, for both the terms *kṛmi* and *kīṭa*, and in Tamil the word *pūcci*, designate an extremely large zoological class comprising insects and beetles as well

9. *Ibid.*, sub verbo: *indragopa*, or *ā mfn. Ved. having Indra as one's protector...*; (as), *m. the insect cochineal of various kinds; a fire-fly (in this sense also indragopaka)*.

10. Cf. (Mrs.) RHYS DAVIDS, *Psalms of the Early Buddhists I: Psalms of the Brethren*, p. 18; I. B. HORNER, *The Book of the Discipline*, III, p. 65, note 1.

as worms. A similar interpretation is given in Dharmapāla's commentary on *Therag.* 13¹¹ which describes *indragopakas* as coral-red *kṛmīs* (*indagopakasañchannā ti, indagopakanāmakehi pavāḷavaṇṇehi rattakimīhi sañchādītā*), but adds to this explanation that the name *indagopaka* is also understood by some people to be a (kind of) red grass or, by still others, the tree *karṇikāra* (*keci pana indagopakanāmāni rattatiṇāni ti vadanti, apare kaṇikārarukkhā ti*). It is difficult to account for the interpretation of *indragopa* as the tree *karṇikāra* (*Pterospermum acerifolium*). It is possible, however, that *indragopa* is a name not for the tree itself, but for the flower, which resembles the *indragopa* with regard both to colour and form. Just as the *indragopa* is roundish and sometimes gold-coloured, so is the flower of the *karṇikāra* golden yellow and looks like a saucer¹². We can, on the other hand, comprehend without difficulty the remark made by Dharmapāla that the word *indagopaka* also can be taken in the sense of *rattatiṇa*. It seems natural, especially in popular imagination, to compare a kind of red grass with the red-coloured *indragopas*, which also cover the earth¹³, and thus to give to this grass the very same name.

We must, when trying to ascertain the meaning of the word *indragopa*, keep the two elements of the compound clearly separate and, accordingly, proceed in two phases: as regards the first member, we notice, by juxtaposition, that there exist, in fact, two distinct groups of compounds beginning with *indra*. While, in the first group, the word *indra* appears in its literal sense (in compounds such as, for example, *indrajāla*, *indrapāna*, *indraśatru* or our ṛgvedic *indragopa*), it does not do so in the second group of compounds where the same lexeme is used metaphorically and, while emphasizing the rôle of Indra as a dispenser of rain, connotes not directly that god, but the rainy season or, simply, the rain¹⁴. Excellent examples are the various names for « rainbow » such as, for instance, *indracāpa*, *indrakārmuka*, *indradhanus*, or *indrāyudha*, which are often rendered directly as « Indra's bow ». Hindu iconography proves quite clearly that this supposedly literal translation is erroneous or at least quite misleading, since, in icono-

11. Cf. (Mrs.) RHYS DAVIDS, *ibid.*, note 1; I. B. HORNER, *ibid.*; K. R. NORMAN, *The Elders' Verses I: Theragāthā*, p. 122; CPD, sub verbo.

12. Cf. V. S. APTE, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *karṇikāra*. For the Pāli use of the *karṇikāra*-flower (*karṇikārapuppha*) « as typical emblem of yellow and of brightness » see *The Pāli Text Society's Pāli Dictionary*, sub verbo.

13. Cf. *Ja* IV, 258, 6: *bhūmi indagopakavaṇṇāya rattāya sukkhasamphassāya tiṇajātiyā sañchannā*, « the earth, covered by a kind of grass, which is of the colour of the *indragopa*, red and pleasant to touch ». Also the *indragopa*, on account of its velvety surface, is very soft and pleasant to touch.

14. It is noteworthy that, as far as phraseology is concerned, the simple statement « it rains » is in Pāli often expressed as *devo* (i.e., *indo*) *vassati*, in Sanskrit *indro varṣati* (besides *parjanya varṣati* or *meghā varṣanti*).

graphy, Indra is not represented as carrying a bow¹⁵. We can add to these words the expression *indrasalila*, « rain-water », used in medical texts, a few names for two of the trees or flowers which are considered as characteristic of the rainy season, namely *indrataru*, *indrardru(ma)* and *indravr̥kṣa* for the Arjuna-tree (*Terminalia Arjuna*) and *indrayava* for the Kuṭaja-tree (*Wrightia antidysenterica*) and, finally, we may mention the compound **indrāgāra*, « a masonry well » or, more exactly, « a rain-water cistern »¹⁶.

It is evident that the terms I have quoted are related to rain and that, linguistically, this fact is expressed by the use of the word *indra* which here serves as a qualifying noun and as such is employed as first member in all such compounds. Since this is the case, too, in the word we are studying, we may, for the time being, interpret *indragopa* as the « *gopa* of the rainy season » or, simply, « rain-*gopa* ». Variations of this name are, as we know, *śakragopa*, *surendragopa* (Suśruta), *harigopa*, *vajrāyudhagopa*, and somewhat more difficult, *tridaśagopa* (*Raghuv.* XI, 42) which probably stands for some longer compound such as *tridaśapati-gopa*. Monier-Williams in his *English and Sanskrit Dictionary* also lists, besides *śakragopa*, the words *indrakīṭa*, *śakrakīṭa*, *tāmrakṛmi* and *agnika*¹⁷, while Hemacandra's *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* gives the following enumeration: *indragopas tv agnirājo vairāṭas titibho'gnikaḥ* (1209). Among these synonyms only *titibha* is really difficult to explain. It can be divided in firstly *titi*, which perhaps is expressive of the bright colour, and secondly the indo-european suffix *bha* (gr. φος) which often occurs in animal names. The expressions *tāmrakṛmi*, *agnika* and *agnirajas* describe the animal's colour¹⁸, but the *bahuvrīhi* *agnirajas* (or *agniraja*), « fire-dust », possibly also its velvety surface. The word *vairāṭa* is especially interesting and brings us back to the synonyms *indravadhū* and *vīravadhū(ṭi)* I have already mentioned. Both names, preserved in Hindī as *indravadhū* and *bīr(a)bahūṭi*, are closely allied to each other. *indravadhū* and *vīra-*

15. The ensign of the bow is, however, characteristic of Rāma and it is noteworthy that one of the words for « rainbow » in Bengali is actually the *tatsama*-word *rāmadhanu(ka)*, lit., « the bow of Rāma ». On some Indian theories on the formation of rainbows see W. H. MAURER, *Sugamānvayā Vṛtti*, Poona, 1965, vol. II, p. 61.

16. Cf. S. K. CHATTERJI, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, p. 324, and R. L. TURNER, *op. cit.*, sub verbo, which also lists the New Indo-aryan descendants of **indrāgāra*.

17. These equivalents are given under the entry *lady-bird*, *lady-bug*, *lady-fly*, *lady-cow* which, as will be shown further on, is, however, totally wrong.

18. A comparison of the *indragopa* with fire (*kṛṣṇavartman*) is clearly implied in *Raghuv.* XI, 42. It is most often described as scarlet or crimson, but is sometimes also said to be reddish-brown or, exactly like fire, gold-coloured (*piṅgala*); cf. *Subhā-ṣitāvali* 1721 (*piṅgala*) and 1722 (*piṅga*). Indian colleagues assure me, however, that the *indragopa* is always red. Dr. G. Bhattacharya, Berlin, draws my attention to the fact that a passage in the *Aparājitapracchā* apparently gives the colour of the *indragopa* as black: *indragopopamāḥ kṛṣṇāḥ pītāḥ sarśapapuṣpavat / śvetāś caiva patākāś ca pūrvādikramayogataḥ* // (GOS CXV, chapt. 147, v. 16).

vadhū(ī) substitute *vadhū*(ī) for *gopa* and thus visualize, as often happens in the popular names of small creatures, the *indragopa* as a « lady » or, more accurately, as is indicated by *vīra*- and *indra*- respectively, as the « lady of the rains »¹⁹.

The words *indra* and *vīra* are, in fact, interchangeable terms. Since *vīra* not only denotes any hero, but also the hero *par excellence*, it is not infrequently used as a synonym for Indra, though, naturally, *vīra*, too, when employed in this type of compound, is to be understood, not in its literal, but in its figurative sense²⁰. Accordingly, we find that the Terminalia Arjuna can be called *indravṛkṣa* as well as *vīravṛkṣa*, or *indrādru(ma)* as well as *vīradru(ma)*, the meaning being always « tree of the rainy season ». We further observe that, occasionally, *vīra* appears in the *vṛddhi*-form, as is clearly shown by the two compounds *vairāntaka* and *vairātaṅka*, which are also names for the Arjuna tree²¹. This observation is basic, since it is only when seen from this angle that *vairāta* discloses its actual meaning. Any first-sight examination would certainly wish to explain *vairāta*, which is composed of *vaira* and *ata* (from the root *at-*), as something like « one that wanders about in hostility (*vaira*) », whereas *vairāta*, when used in the sense indicated by Hemacandra, actually means « one that creeps about (*ata*) and belongs to the rainy season (*vaira*) », which is, indeed, a very suitable name for the *indragopa*.

There now remains the problem of how to account for the second part of the compound we are treating. As the first member consisting of *indra* is merely employed to qualify *gopa*, we may conclude that, at least theoretically, not only the longer term *indragopa* as a whole, but also the very word *gopa* itself designates a particular animal of the zoological group of the arthropodes. *indragopa* being a « *gopa* related to rain », we may postulate an independent noun *gopa* which, though never used separately, presents the real animal name to be studied and,

19. Two interesting adjectives are *aindrāliśa* and *aindrādṛśa*. Both lexemes are given in Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati's Dictionary, but are quoted in Monier-Williams' *Skt.-Engl.-Dictionary*, too, which explains them as « *made of Indrāliśa* (Indrādṛśa respectively) or the cochineal insect ». Although we cannot really judge these two terms, since no textual references are given, it seems possible that M.-W.'s interpretation is wrong and that *aindrāliśa* as well as *aindrādṛśa* are, in reality, synonyms of the word *indragopa*, the first having the sense of « (an animal) moving around (from *ā+liś*) in the rainy season », the latter that of « (an animal) to be seen (from *ā+dṛś*) in the rainy season ».

20. In certain names of plants used in Indian medicine the words *indra** and *vīra** do, however, not indicate « rain ». Here their significance is, in fact, « Indra », since God Indra, on account of his associations with the Aśvins, who are said to have introduced him in medicine, is considered to be one of the masters of the medical science; cf. J. FILLIOZAT, *The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine* (English Transl.), Delhi, 1964, p. 89.

21. Cf. *aindram ambu*, « Indric water », « rain-water », in Vāgbhaṭa, *Aṣṭāṅgahrdayas*. I, 5, 4. *aindram ambu*, *aindraṃ salilam* and similar phrases form of course, when compounded, *aindrāmbu*, *aindrasalila*, etc.

therefore, is of the utmost importance when attempting to explain *indragopa*. The animal called *indragopa* is most assuredly not identical with the « fire-fly » or *khadyota*, other Sanskrit names of which are *khajyotis*, *guhmadīpaka*, *cīlamīlikā*, *jyotirīṅga(ṇa)*, *jyotirbīja*, *dhvāntonmeṣa* and *prabhākīṭa*. In Hindī it is also known as *khadyot(a)* or, more commonly, *jug(a)nū* or *paṭabīj(a)nā*. The *khadyota* could be confused with the *indragopa*, since the *khadyota*, too, is sometimes used in rainy season descriptions. It is, however, entirely different: it does not cover the earth in large numbers, as the *indragopa* does. It flies and, as it glows, is characteristic of the evening and the early hours of night²², whereas the *indragopa* creeps slowly on the ground and is never referred to in connection with night-time. Due to the fact that the word *go* had acquired a number of senses as early as in Vedic times, the most important of these being « cow », « earth », « ray », « heaven », « speech » and « organ of sense » (*indriya*), the compound *gopa* can be understood in several ways. The most usual meanings are, of course, (1) « cowherd » and (2) « protector of the earth », i.e. « king ». Neither of them seems to agree very well with the contexts in which *indragopa* occurs. The sense of « cowherd », so often adopted in translations into English, may at first appear corroborated by the existence of Skt. *gopālikā*, Pr. *goālīā*²³ which is constructed in a similar way, but this denotes a kind of horsefly or gadfly, and, consequently, refers to a different creature. It cannot be doubted that the word *gopālikā* means « one who keeps to (or watches) the cows ». The *indragopa*, on the other hand, is never described as living near dung-heaps or cattle and, moreover, is said to be perfectly harmless. It is worthy of note that both species of animals are discriminated also by Hemacandra who in *Abhidhānac.* 1209, that is, in the half-*śloka* preceding the verse on the *indragopa*, catalogues the horsefly, in fact very strikingly, as: *gopālikā mahābhīrur gomayotthā tu gardabhī*, « the horsefly, the extremely terrible fly, the fly arising on dung-heaps, the ass-fly ».

The Pandits consulted by H. H. Wilson analysed the compound *indragopa* as *indra*, « best », *go*, « light » and *pa* or *pā*, « who nourishes or possesses », which, when taken together, would yield a meaning like « (an animal) that possesses the very best light ». It is obvious that the Pandits' interpretation of *indra* is wrong. Their explanation of *gopa* as « one having light » can, in principle, be accepted, but is probably incorrect, too, since the *indragopa* is neither shiny nor luminous. The relevant texts do not refer to this circumstance either, but frequently mention as its most particular features that the *indragopa* appears in connection with the rains, that its colour is red, usually scarlet or crimson, and, as

22. Cf. *Bhāgav.-Pur.* X (1), 20, 8: *niśāmukheṣu khadyotās tamasā bhānti na grahāḥ*, « because of the darkness, fire-flies, not the planets, glowed at the beginning of the night ». Cf. V. RAGHAVAN, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

23. See K. R. NORMAN, *loc. cit.*, p. 122 f.

we have seen especially often, that *indragopas* inhabit the earth in large swarms which, while forming red patches, contrast beautifully with the green colour of the patches of moist and fresh grass. Although I admit that the interpretation of an animal name need not necessarily be supported by evidence from purely textual sources, a satisfactory etymology of the word *gopa*, and hence *indragopa*, can be derived just from the last-mentioned characteristic. Employing various words such as *kṣiti*, *dharā*, *bhūmi*, *mahī*, *medinī* etc., authors, when describing this favourite scene, make mention, over and over again, of the earth, another often used name for which is precisely the polysemantic word *go* occurring in *gopa*. Since, moreover, *indragopas* are wingless and, as I have stated, crawl slowly around, it is, to say the least, very tempting to understand *gopa* in the sense of « one protecting the ground », or, more adequately, « (an animal) that keeps to the ground ».

Let us now turn to considerations of a more zoological nature. My argument might have already shown that the *indragopa*, first of all, does not denote several animals simultaneously, as the great variety of both Latin and popular names offered in dictionaries are so liable to suggest. *indragopa* denotes only one particular creature, but is definitely not an insect. Muhammad Jāyasī, in two of his verses²⁴, would not have likened the tears that the lonely lady (*virahinī*) is shedding to *bīr(a)bahūtīs*, if these *bīr(a)bahūtīs* really possessed a typical insect-like, tripartite body. The *indragopa* is thus not identical with the *Mutilla occidentalis*²⁵, nor with the *Buccella carniola*²⁶, nor with the *Coccus lacca* or *Coccus cacti* (i.e. the cochineal) both of which are known to be scale insects, but have apparently been identified with the *indragopa*, because red laquer is obtained from the *Coccus lacca* and vermilion dye from the *Coccus cacti*. All these animals, and the *Coccinella* as well, belong to the class of the insects²⁷. The *indragopa*, as has been rightly defined by both J. T. Platts²⁸ and Mousset-Dupuis²⁹, is an animal of the species of the *Trombidiidae* (acarus). It figures in the zoological class of the *Arachnida*, and belongs to the order of the *Mites*. Most probably it appertains, following further divisions, to the sub-order of the *Trombidiiformae* and, finally, to the family of the *Trombidiidae* which are most abundantly represented especially in tropical countries, with about one thousand different species. A European genus of these *Trombidiidae* has been identified by Linnaeus (1758) as the *Acarus holosericus*, popularly known as the velvet-mite, which is crimson or scarlet in colour and appears

24. *Padumāvati* 223,5 and 608,8.

25. K. N. NADKARNI, *The Indian Materia Medica*, Bombay, no date.

26. CPD, s.v. *inda-gopaka*.

27. The class *Insecta* comprises, among others, winged and unwinged insects, lice and beetles.

28. J. T. PLATTS, *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī, and English*, Oxford, 1960 (reprint), s.v. *indrabahū* (species of acarus).

29. MOUSSET-DUPUIS, *Dictionnaire Tamoul-français*, s.v. *intirakōpam* (*Acarus holosericus*).

in profusion on grass during summer and autumn. Unlike many other representatives of the *Trombidiidae*, the *indragopa*, which belongs to a genus found in most parts of the Indian sub-continent, is harmless to men as well as to cattle. It is of a rather small size, approximately as big as a pea, and, being a mite, has a body, in which only the mouth-parts appear separate, while head and body are united³⁰.

The word *indragopa* is distinct from its homonym found in the *Rgveda*. Sanskrit- and other dictionaries should catalogue the term *indragopa* and equivalent words like *indravadhū*, *vairāṭa*, etc. as having the sense « "the rain-mite", a species belonging to the *Trombidiidae* », and also list, thought it is only attested in the compound *indragopa*, the special zoological connotation of the word *gopa* which, in agreement with this examination, should be rendered as « a mite; literally, "(an animal) that keeps to the earth", as, for example, a mite; see *indragopa* ». To this may be added that, in Mahāyāna texts, the word *indragopa* has acquired the meaning « red » and in compounds with *śīras* or *śīrṣa(n)* signifies « redheaded ». Both types of compound, *indragopaśīras* and *indragopaśīrṣa*, are used in describing certain (miraculous) elephants³¹. In the Tibetan historical work *rGyal.rabs* the *indragopa* is most curiously mentioned as « one of the five divine jewels among the substances devoted to a costly Chorten »³².

30. A class of the phylum *Arthropoda* which, in its mapority, consists of land animals and, besides numerous other orders, includes scorpions, spiders, daddy longlegs, and mites.

31. See F. EDGERTON, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. I: *Dictionary*, s.v. *indragopa*.

32. See H. A. JÄSCHKE, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary* and CHANDRA DAS, *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (quoting Jäschke), s.v. *indragopa*.

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